

*United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE: Selective Intervention – Rethinking America's Strategic Employment of Force

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

MAJOR BRIAN D. BERNTH
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

AY 2007-08

Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member:

Approved:

Date:

Oral Defence Committee Member:

Approved:

Date:

LTCOL JSG Pagan 28 APRIL 2008

[Signature]

Report Documentation Page			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188		
<p>Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.</p>					
1. REPORT DATE 19 FEB 2008	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2008 to 00-00-2008			
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Selective Intervention - Rethinking America's Strategic Employment of Force			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S)			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) United States Marine Corps,Command and Staff College, Marine Corps Combat Development,Marine Corps University, 2076 South Street,Quantico,VA,22134-5068			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 30	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

Executive Summary

Title: Selective Intervention – Rethinking America’s Strategic Employment of Force

Author: Major Brian D. Bernth, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: In the absence of a “war of survivability” and the lack of true political support for military interventions in the near term, it has become imperative that policy makers shape future decisions to commit forces to conflict with a realistic concept of the time requirements needed in achievement of a suitable end-state.

Discussion: The careful use of America’s Armed Forces will remain a topic of interest for as long as we remain a sovereign nation. Looking carefully at modern United States’ “use of force” doctrines as well as the forces themselves, this paper focuses attention on the development of future intervention policies. Past “doctrines” focused on overwhelming force in achievement of vital objectives, yet current use seems to tilt in favor of a “limited-objective” school of thought. Current attention also focuses on how best to achieve success while sustaining a prolonged and protracted global conflict of ideals. Sustainment has now clearly become the critical element in the current fight abroad and thus, it may now be time to re-focus our attention to the decisions to commit forces to objectives that are open for interpretation in the end. Examining the sustainability of America’s “all-volunteer” force, one finds that the critical component of time must be closely measured prior to choosing any intervention strategy. Lacking the necessary political support for an open ended commitment, the inability to understand the realities of the effects of time has put a tremendous strain on our “Total Force” organization and has greatly reduced our ability to respond to future strategic threats.

Conclusion: Strategic use of force will continue to follow the basic tenets of the modern doctrines espoused concerning use of force. Yet, future United States use of force must take a much more realistic view of “end state planning.” Without the political will necessary for a supreme commitment, time will become the crucial factor in considering any future employment of the “all-volunteer” force.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

QUOTATION FROM, ABSTRACTION FROM, OR REPRODUCTION OF ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS DOCUMENT IS PERMITTED PROVIDED PROPER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS MADE.

Table of Contents

DISCLAIMER	i
PREFACE	iii
SELECTIVE INTERVENTION	1
Introduction	2
The Weinberger Doctrine	4
The Powell Doctrine	6
The Bush Doctrine	8
Doctrinal Conclusions	10
The Total Force	11
The Strategic 'Operational Reserve'?	13
Force Conclusions	15
Analysis and Conclusions	19
CITATIONS AND ENDNOTES	22
BIBLIOGRAPHY	24

Preface

The following thesis is a result of the author's experiences serving in the very different theaters of the current Global War on Terror both as a staff officer, planner, and operator. These experiences both humbled and opened the author's eyes across a broad spectrum of experiences. It will also provide a thought-provoking look at the author's time in the "hot-seat" as the Headquarters Marine Corps MMOA-Fixed Wing Monitor, juggling a complex myriad of tasks in what soon became a very personal daily struggle to manage and sustain an exhausted population. The lessons gained throughout a fledgling career will continue to foster thought and emphasize the strategic rationale behind the actions. This continued study would not have been possible without the many subsequent discussions with peers, superior officers, professors, and well respected retired military officers of several generations. These discussions not only provided continual insight from past decisions of force employment but also a continued interest of the current ability to sustain the fight. In the end, it only attempts to scratch the surface of what the use of military force really means, but hopes to add a sobering realization to a decision process in which a concept of time has truly become the critical planning factor. This thesis represents the culmination of a year of learning that would not have been possible without my wife, Laura Bernth, my mentor, Dr. J.W. Gordon, and the many thought provoking discussions of LtGen (ret) P. K. Van Riper, Col Steve Nitzschke, LTCOL (ret) Ned Criscimanga, Maj (ret) Lon Bernth, Maj. Oscar Alvarez, Dr. Eric Shibuya, and Dr. Paul Gelpi.

Selective Intervention

There can be no greater decision than that of committing a nation's citizen defenders to military intervention. With a bill to be paid in blood and treasure, it is these decisions that have done much to shape our young nation and its culture. This utilization of America's Armed Forces will remain a topic of intense dialogue and interest for as long as we remain a sovereign nation. Current attention has been focused on how best to achieve success while sustaining a prolonged and protracted global conflict of ideals. Instead it may now be time to re-focus our attention to the decisions to commit forces in the first place. Just as conflict in the past has transformed the military it has also forced the policy makers, academia, media, and public to critically analyze the decisions leading to military intervention. The current conflict is no exception. The length and nature of a continued global struggle against militant Islam and its tactics of terror will continue to affect future decisions concerning the use of United States military forces. This struggle is radically re-shaping both the forces themselves and their inherent readiness. The current "Long War," as it has been characterized, is today testing to the breaking point the United States' use of its "all volunteer" armed forces and carries with it dire implications for the future. Current expansion of the "volunteer force" answers an immediate need for more manpower. Yet, assessment of the long war finds this to be a reaction to the issues of sustainment long ago predicated on much larger "use of force" decisions. Strategically, is "growing the force" really a long-term solution? This paper will argue that it is not. Rather, if the current use of American military might is to provide us an example of future uses, then we must now conclude that the constraint of time is indeed the most critical factor driving any future interventions. In the absence of a "war of survivability" and the lack of true "political will" it has become imperative that policy makers shape future decisions to commit forces to conflict

with a realistic concept of the time requirements needed in achievement of a suitable end-state. Future involvement will require a calculated and at times cold discussion concerning the use of American military force. We must realize that America's strategic future will be shaped ever more by a doctrine of "Selective Intervention."

Introduction

Seven years, more than three thousand American deaths, and over a half trillion dollars later, an achievable end state still seems to elude the grasp of the world's lone superpower.¹ Tackling a problem of such epic proportions in an ambivalent and sometimes apathetic world is a daunting task by any measure. Standing side by side with my brothers in arms we have witnessed heroic deeds, acts of courage and compassion, and selflessness, on almost a daily basis. We have experienced first hand the victories and defeats at the tactical level, and have renewed a sense of sacrifice that goes beyond words. Yet, we have also grown resigned to the reality of this new war and that it will be our life's work. Just as previous generations have faced challenges of epic proportions, ours too will be tried in our own arena. Central to this monograph is the inherent reality that conflict will always be present and that Americans in uniform will be called upon to enter the fray. An in-depth review of past "strategic doctrines" guiding the decisions to commit forces to conflict will be conducted. Conclusions will be based on future application of force with an emphasis on what is now the most critical of end state planning factors, time. Representative republic or promoter of liberty and democracy, Victor Davis Hanson's words as observed in *Carnage and Culture* apply just the same, "Once empires commit to military adventure, time becomes an enemy rather than an ally."⁴

Any discussion concerning time allotted to the achievement of national objectives must be conducted alongside that of a nation's will. As this is a topic of great depth in itself, the

surface will only be lightly scratched. There is a prevailing belief that the American will is based on what the American public believes is “morally right.” Given this assumption, the intensity of effort in supporting this moral effort will be determined by the population. The ability to shape conflict and connect with a populace utilizing the concept of a moral crusade against tyranny and evil that were hallmarks of two of our most successful modern presidents, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan.

More recently, on the 5th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, attack, in a presidential address to the nation President George W. Bush proclaimed, “The war against this enemy is more than a military conflict. It is the decisive ideological struggle of the 21st century, and the calling of our generation.”⁵ Yet, the nation seems unmoved to what could be considered an existential struggle between freedom and extremism. Utilizing the Donald Nuechterlein, National Interest Matrix⁶, the inability to shape the current fight in terms of a “war of survival” or “vital concerns” has severely hampered the ability of all but a part of our nation to feel the extreme sacrifices necessary for victory. In a day and an age in which moral relativity is assumed to be tied ever more directly to individualism vice an accepted set of national values, it is increasingly difficult to find the will necessary for a supreme unified effort. This is never clearer then when viewed in terms of sacrifice and time required for the current fight. Thus, the ability to maintain and/or shape the “political will” directly affects the considerations of time and intensity.

Considering this “will” as an absolute or misconstruing it as something it is not has led in past and present to at times to nasty, expensive, and complicated misadventures, many of which have shaped future force structure and employment theories for decades following. The same could be said in year six of what is now classified as “The Long War.”⁷ To further examine future employment of U.S. military forces it is imperative for us to first turn our attention to the

past. We will begin by examining several “doctrines” as they have come to be known, that have weighed heavily on past and present American political decisions to utilize military force. Discussion will then turn to the variable most directly affected by decisions made without regard to the realities of time, the Total Force, or the members of a force who will bear the burden and sacrifices of a nation’s call, firsthand. Conclusions will be drawn from an analysis of each and a further recommendation for a National Strategy based on the concept of “Selective Intervention.”

The Weinberger Doctrine

Perhaps the single most analyzed discussion of military intervention in modern times was offered by Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, in an address to the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on 28 November 1984. Though most discussion since has focused on his six criteria warranting use of military force, it may be the general context of his speech and the framing of his points that remain most prophetic. His references to ideological and religiously driven conflict, and the inability to shape a comprehensive national will to confront a threat, seem like a speech given more recently than twenty years in the past.⁸

With the “lessons” of Beirut and Vietnam still fresh, the Secretary presented a well thought out and almost legalistic case for future U.S. involvement. Beginning by referencing President George Washington’s farewell address in which the “father of our country” left office by declaring, “Be wary of foreign entanglements,” Secretary Weinberger’s comments went on to discuss the marrying of the intangible and tangible components of national power in achievement of national objectives. As Carl von Clausewitz famously stated, “war is merely the continuation of policy by other means,”⁹ so resurfaced the messy questions pitting the military versus their civilian masters that have arrived with each major conflict and limited intervention since the Second World War. What Clausewitz did not discuss in his treatise *On War* were the

circumstances under which war becomes the correct means with which to pursue policy. Secretary Weinberger's proposal of the following criteria attempted to answer this and in doing so summarize much of the military establishment's desire to help shape future decisions regarding military intervention. Undoubtedly his thoughts remain the basis for much of the modern "doctrines" and adaptations developed and fostered by future policy makers:

1. First, the United States should not commit forces to combat overseas unless the particular engagement or occasion is deemed vital to our national interest or that of our allies...
2. Second, if we decide it is necessary to put combat troops into a given situation, we should do so wholeheartedly, and with the clear intention of winning. If we are unwilling to commit the forces or resources necessary to achieve our objectives, we should not commit them at all. Of course if the particular situation requires only limited force to win our objectives, then we should not hesitate to commit forces sized accordingly...
3. Third, if we do decide to commit forces to combat overseas, we should have clearly defined political and military objectives...
4. Fourth, the relationship between our objectives and the forces we have committed – their size, composition and disposition – must be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary...
5. Fifth, before the U.S. commits combat forces abroad, there must be some reasonable assurance we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress...
6. Six and finally, the commitment of the U.S. forces to combat should be a last resort.¹⁰

Secretary Weinberger's comments by his own admission were phrased with a negative tone.¹¹ He understood both the gravity of his thoughts, and that he also now presided over a generation of officers that had witnessed the incremental approach seen in the Vietnam War. Most importantly, Secretary Weinberger left behind not a "cook book" approach but a doctrinal legacy emphasizing the rationale thought process he believed must be adhered to when decisions concerning American military force were tabled.

The Powell Doctrine

Strikingly similar to Weinberger's thoughts and recently validated by the Persian Gulf War of 1990-1991 it was President George H.W. Bush and General Colin Powell who would further shape discussions concerning the future use of United States military power. Grappling with challenges as the sole superpower in a world increasingly fragmented with ethnic and religious strife, Bush offered a more flexible set of guidelines for use of force while still enforcing the need to maintain clear and achievable mission guidelines. His speech at West Point in 1993 highlights an adaptation to the Weinberger Doctrine:

Using military force makes sense as a policy where the stakes warrant, where and when force can be effective, where no other policies are likely to prove effective, where its application can be limited in scope and time, and where the potential benefits justify the potential costs and sacrifice.¹²

His appreciation for the fact that the United States must lead has remained a steadfast component in all administrations since. Yet his conceptual understanding of the use of force reflected a deep understanding of the reality of the United States position in the world. This understanding that we could not remain insulated from world events would lay the framework for the Clinton Administration in the 1990's as well. But his comments concerning global policing are quite prophetic and interesting to our present discussion concerning time:

No, the United States should not seek to be the world's policeman. There is no support abroad or at home for us to play this role, nor should there be. We would exhaust ourselves in the process, wasting precious resources needed to address those problems at home and abroad that we cannot afford to ignore.¹³

During the Clinton Administration it was President George H.W. Bush's "limited objective" mindset that most represented then Secretary of Defense Les Aspin's thoughts on military intervention. Aspin saw the world as it was, much like former President Bush, when he stated "that this brand new world of ours is a world of turmoil and agitation. And that agitation

has provoked calls for the use of military force in a whole range of circumstances that don't fit the mold."¹⁴ Under this strategic outlook Aspin was determined to not let America's forces become like the Cold War's nuclear weapons --- important, expensive, but not useful.¹⁵ Even with a change in administrations there is no argument by a Secretary of Defense to the foundation and primacy of Weinberger's theories, but instead to the interpretation of political objectives that drive the use of force in the first place. Aspin described his preferred use of military power as the "limited objective school." Its basis seems to be, "the use of military force against an adversary to influence his behavior elsewhere."¹⁶ A case can certainly be made that this limited objective school of thought has indeed prevailed in the post Cold War era. Throughout the majority of the past decade and at a minimum following the Gulf War of 1990-1991, U.S. military involvement, though substantial, has indeed generally followed the Aspin and George H. W. Bush theories.

When "strategic doctrine" is discussed it is not Weinberger, Aspin, or Bush most often quoted but Colin Powell. His articulation of "use of force" seems to reign supreme in most modern readings and discussion forums. It could be quite possible that Powell, an influential member of multiple White House staffs, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a Vietnam veteran, a military assistant to Secretary Weinberger himself, and Gulf War hero, brought with him a credibility others lacked. Perhaps more importantly he enjoyed a connection with an American public that adored him.

Powell accepted the post Cold-War need to undertake peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. Yet, given any discussion on use of force he trumpeted a need to utilize "overwhelming force." Powell proposed a series of questions, or tests that should be asked anytime violent force was to be utilized:

Is the political objective we seek to achieve important, clearly defined and understood?
Have all other nonviolent policy means failed?
Will military force achieve the objective?
At what cost?
Have the gains and risks been analyzed?
How might the situation that we seek to alter, once it is altered by force, develop further
and what might be the consequences?¹⁷

At the heart of Powell's thoughts lies an inherent need to carefully match the use of military force to political objectives. No matter how large or how small it is these objectives that should set the when and the where of military force. It is also these objectives, even when limited in scope, which should not be forgotten. Those of the "limited school" of thought, have at times misconstrued both Weinberger and Powell's thoughts as weakness and timidity, but it is these carefully worded maxims that seem to be essential in providing decisive results even in "limited" engagements.

The Bush Doctrine

The oft quoted and frequently misunderstood "Bush Doctrine" is a phrase used to describe various related foreign policy principles of current United States president George W. Bush, created in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks. In its simplest form this doctrine initially described a policy in which the United States had an inherent right to treat countries that harbor or give aid to terrorist groups as terrorists themselves. It has since expanded to include the additional elements of preemption, democracy promotion, and unilateral military use. Issued in 2002 as President Bush's first *National Security Strategy*, Chapter V summarizes the Administration's approach to using force.¹⁸ Jeffrey Record, writing in *Parameters*, claims, "The reiteration of presidential statements and speeches following 11 September, put in place a clear, declaratory use-of-force policy whose objective can be found in Chapter V's own title: 'Prevent

Our Enemies from Threatening Us, Our Allies, and Our Friends with Weapons of Mass Destruction.”¹⁹

Essential to the formulation of the “Bush Doctrine” is the debate that raged within the Administration’s two competing schools of thought. Senior policy makers, particularly from the Department of State and headed by Colin Powell, argued for a continuation of the multilateral traditions of the past or the “school of containment” which had been put in place during the Cold War. Yet it was the policy of justified “direct and unilateral” action advocated by the Department of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Richard Cheney that form the foundations of the doctrine. We will examine this a bit more as it directly affects the current decisions regarding United States use of force presently.

Like his father, President George W. Bush proposed a deep intellectual argument for “use of force.” In a speech given at the United States Military Academy often overlooked by his critics he stated:

The gravest danger to freedom lies at the perilous crossroads of radicalism and technology. When the spread of chemical and biological and nuclear weapons, along with ballistic missile technology -- when that occurs, even weak states and small groups could attain a catastrophic power to strike great nations. Our enemies have declared this very intention, and have been caught seeking these terrible weapons. They want the capability to blackmail us, or to harm us, or to harm our friends -- and we will oppose them with all our power.

For much of the last century, America's defense relied on the Cold War doctrines of deterrence and containment. In some cases, those strategies still apply. But new threats also require new thinking. Deterrence -- the promise of massive retaliation against nations -- means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies.²⁰

There is little to no argument that in facing a new enemy intent on our destruction a radically different policy may indeed be justified, but to what extent? The Bush Doctrine was a sound policy response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September but it has now evolved into a

policy of democracy building the world over, a task that makes the post World War-II Marshall Plan pale in comparison. Time will tell if the “whole is greater than the sum of its parts,” as Thomas Donnelly claims in his assessment of the Bush Doctrine:

This return to a policy of primacy represents the realities of international politics in the post-cold-war, sole-superpower world. Further, the combination of these two factors--America's universal political principles and unprecedented global power and influence--make the Bush Doctrine a whole greater than the sum of its parts; it is likely to remain the basis for U.S. security strategy for decades to come.²¹

Doctrinal Conclusions

All of the leaders discussed above made it unequivocally clear that there is no fixed set of rules one can follow for the use of military force. Formulating a fixed set of rules on how and when to go to war would “destroy the ambiguity we might want to exist,”²² Powell exclaims. In President George H.W. Bush’s words, “to adopt rigid criteria would guarantee mistakes involving American interests and lives, and would give would-be troublemakers a blueprint for determining their own actions.”²³ Whether one subscribes to an “all or nothing approach” as laid out by Secretary Weinberger and trumpeted by General Powell, or to the “limited objective” school of thought of George H.W. Bush and Aspin, all paint a picture in which the “means” of military force can be helpful in achievement of national interests.²⁴ But none directly address the strategic importance of time as essential for consideration in any formulation of national policy.

The water muddies when the military force no longer works in concert with the other “means” of national policy, and instead takes center stage as the only real viable option available to promote the current *National Security Strategy*. The current two-pillared approach is as follows:

1. The first pillar is promoting freedom, justice and human dignity – working to end tyranny, to promote effective democracies, and to extend prosperity through free and fair trade and wise development policies.
2. The second pillar of the strategy is confronting the challenges of our time by leading a growing community of democracies.²⁵

This approach provides us with noble goals, but leaves little doubt as to the lead agency in its execution. No other executive department is as large or as well funded as the Defense Department. Under the current application of the "Bush Doctrine," no other department has the "means" within it to realistically sustain a policy of such breadth. Yet, without "the great arsenal of democracy,"²⁶ fully committed to the achievement of the above, and reliance solely on an "all volunteer force," even it will struggle and these goals will remain out of reach.

Regardless of the next administration's political leanings they will likely follow the Powell doctrine. The American people and Congress, weary of a two-front war with limited results, and in the absence of further large scale terrorist attacks or some other tremendous shock, are unlikely to support further large scale military interventions for years to come. The U.S. military might instead welcome a revival of such strategic guidelines as well. In the current state, it will take years and multiple administrations to rebuild, refit, and resource the force. Whether one views the current state in Iraq or Afghanistan as single battles in a larger war, localized insurgencies, or even some form of civil war attempting to shape ethnic groups into independent states, a case can be made that no amount of conventional forces will ultimately solve the problem. The Powell doctrine has already outlived its author in the public domain, but it may turn out to have even greater influence in the future.

The Total Force

We will now turn our attention to a discussion concerning those most directly affected by a nation's decision to employ force. As briefly discussed earlier, there seems to be no consensual "national will" by the populace to sustain or sacrifice for such a "Long War." Whether the call for sacrifice has not been communicated well or possibly even absent from the start, democracy's greatest strength, a strong and resolute population, has not been brought to

bear against the current enemy. If for today the nation seems content to fight and fund such a war with its “all volunteer force” for the foreseeable future, the question then becomes for how long can it be sustained?

Dr. Harvey Sicherman’s thoughtful article, “Iraq Endgame,” poses an interesting argument about the strategic shift in the Bush administration’s policy in early 2007 when he commented, “So ended the first phase of America’s reaction to 9/11, namely the attempt to wage the struggle with ‘forces on hand,’ seeking swift decisive results at minimum sacrifice.”²⁷ Commenting first on a strategy that has failed from as early on as 2003, his discussion focuses attention on the fact that America’s all volunteer “Total Force” is built from the ground up to win swift and decisive victories once employed. The verdict is not yet in, but forced now to accept the realities and costs of the “Long War,” one must take a careful look at the realities of our current strategic force posture.

There is no argument that the U.S. military is stretched thin, particularly in its ground forces. Comments from both active and retired Generals, numerous strategic think tanks, and members of Congress only seem to back this assessment up. The Chief of Staff of the Army, General William Casey Jr., testified recently to the House Armed Services Committee:

The current demand for our forces exceeds the sustainable supply. We are consumed with meeting the demands of the current fight and are unable to provide ready forces as rapidly as necessary for other potential contingencies.²⁸

Former Chief of Staff of the Army General Peter J. Schoomaker testified months earlier to the same committee: “I am concerned with the Army’s Strategic Depth.”²⁹ While consecutive Chief of Staffs sounded the alarm Army readiness has fallen to its lowest point since the Vietnam War according to a 2006 Congressional Budget Office report.³⁰ Future sustainment in regards to time will only further exacerbate the issue and prolong as well as increase the rebuilding costs.

Saying there is general concern in both the sustainment of the current fight and the strategic risks associated is an understatement in regards to our national security. This strategic risk will now be addressed by looking closely at our current solution. The current answer to rebalancing the risks associated with our current ground force posture is to “Grow the Force.” Both the Army and the Marines have begun implementation of substantial incremental personnel increases to take effect in fiscal year 2008. The Army will increase its nominal end strength by 65,000 and the Marines by 27,000. Ultimately this decision comes at the end of staunch Pentagon resistance from the former Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld in which a risk assessment enforced a strategic guidance of “leap ahead” technologies and precision targeting. The most readily advanced reasoning for troop increases is not strategic at all, but instead focuses on the ability to sustain current troop rotations, by increasing the deployment/home station ratios. Ironic as the effort now finally begins to focus on time as the most important aspect in this need to grow the force. But taking into account that recruiting, training, and equipping these “new” units will take years still does not seem to answer the mail on reducing the strain on units currently involved in the fight, unless as Frank Hoffman points out, “we assume we will maintain significant forces in Iraq out past 2012.”³¹ What it does add is yet another variable to a time concentric equation. Interestingly enough many of the variables for this equation could be found through a careful review and analysis of the force doctrines previously discussed. What should drive discussion concerning future ground force expansion is not troop rotations but what are the strategic justifications in what is a long term solution to a near term problem.

The Strategic “Operational Reserve”?

No discussion on America’s all-volunteer force would be considered complete without inclusion of our Guard and Reserve Components. The “Total-Force” – supported and created under General Creighton Abrams in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, permitted an expanded Army, which would rely on both reserve and National Guard units in order to mobilize for conflict. This was a bold move of which Abrams declared, “They’re not taking us to war again without calling up the reserves,”³² hoped to “secure the tie with ‘American Society’ ruptured in the past [Vietnam] conflict,” according to Eliot A. Cohen in Supreme Command.³³ With the active force now bound at the hip with units both in the Reserves and Guard, should substantial numbers of troops be required one must also look to the health of our “strategic” reserves when considering the overall health of our forces, what is portrayed is shocking.

In Congressional testimony Major General (ret) Arnold L. Punaro reported his commission’s findings on the “State of the United States National Guard & Reserve Forces.” His finding are summarized by the commission’s conclusion:

The current posture and utilization of the National Guard and Reserves as an ‘operational reserve’ is not sustainable over time. If not corrected with significant changes to law and policy, the reserve component’s ability to serve our nation will diminish.³⁴

His comments are backed by numerous prominent figures concerned with depth of our strategic reserves, but are some of the first to address just how important the factor of time is when considering strategic employment of U.S. forces. With over 590,000 guardsmen and reservists activated since September 11, 2001, for Operations Noble Eagle (Homeland Defense and Response missions), Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan, and global war on terror operations), and Iraqi Freedom they have more than shouldered their burden.

The clear shift of Reserves and National Guard from a “Strategic Reserve” to that of an

“Operational Reserve” is stated in the current administration’s 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report:

To fight the long war and conduct other future contingency operations, joint force Commanders need to have more immediate access to the Total Force. In particular, the Reserve Component must be operationalized, so that select Reservists and units are more accessible and more readily deployable than today.³⁵

This distinct shift in policy began immediately following the September 11, 2001 attacks, but has flown under the radar until now. Sustainment of the Total Force, reliant as it is on Guard and Reserve members, is now beginning to show cracks of strain and the effects of time. Though units and individuals have performed valiantly in missions for whom they are not trained, resourced, or funded to accomplish, the strategic well of our Guard and Reserve forces is running dry. With over 55% of the U.S. Army’s capabilities tied to its reserve and guard forces, our ability to respond globally, particularly with ground forces, or meet with a substantially increased homeland security mission, is at best questionable.³⁶ At a recent Governors Association meeting with the President of the United States, the number one topic presented was the lack of units and equipment to meet the emergency and homeland security needs within the states.³⁷ The Governors’ concerns and increasingly hostile rhetoric underscore an ever-increasing tension between the Defense Department’s transformation to an “Operational Reserve,” and the state’s traditional need for guard and reserve manpower.

One must also take into account that forecast growth of the active ground components includes relatively small increases to the Guard and Reserves. Though involved in mostly a ground concentric fight, the enormous amount of airlift required is mind numbing. Given the fact that much of the Air Force strategic heavy lift and tanker support is also found in the Guard and Reserves adds yet another dimension. These aged platforms flying at unheard of usage rates will need to be replaced at enormous cost. The acceptance of risk and incredible expense

incurred, as we continue to deplete our strategic reserve forces, greatly unbalances our ability to respond to a variety of crises across the spectrum. As there will not be any immediate change to the U.S. “total force” construct in the near future, any future large-scale employment of force will find a careful review of this crucial element in regards to time and sustainment a must.

Force Conclusions

To borrow a line from House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton, “This is foremost a question of strategic risk.”³⁸ The current balance of the United States military’s strategic ability to respond globally has been placed in the hands of air and sea power. There is no question that our ground forces still remain the best trained, best led, and best equipped in the world. Adding to the fact that the majority of those who fill the ranks of the ground forces are multiple combat tour veterans the force is indeed formidable. Yet, the calculated risks taken with the employment of the “all volunteer force” have underestimated how long it could be employed as well as the risking its future “reset” and “reconstitution” on astronomical budgets not yet approved. Just as a decision to employ force on such a scale relies on political will, so too will it be required to now recruit, grow and re-equip, them. Factors that are driven both on future timelines and budgets yet proposed or paid for.

The expansion of the ground forces, both Army and Marines, will assist in “re-balancing” the risk in a force that is basically on its third rotation. “Unprecedented for an all-volunteer force, with the exception, I think, of the Revolutionary War,” claims national policy advisor, Tammy Schultz.³⁹ But with this re-balancing should come a careful assessment of the strategic reasoning of the expansion. First and foremost, gambling at the global strategic risk table without the flexibility to employ a significant ground capability does not bode well. The United States must either reduce commitments across the globe or provide more forces both. Both are difficult

propositions and carry associated costs. Second, we must take the pressure off our National Guard and Reserve assets. Should we find ourselves needing to engage “vitally” elsewhere in the world we currently have no strategic or operational reserve to draw ground forces from. This is also an important consideration relative to homeland security and natural disaster issues on the home front. Third, in building this force, we must debate our future national security priorities to ensure we recruit, train, equip, and most importantly fund these units from the start. We should not accept any reduction in quality for quantity.

In transforming the United States Military for the future many have argued for a more counter-insurgence focused force, one with a greatly strengthened Special Operations component. Others like Max Boot have hailed a second coming of a colonial light infantry much in the mode of Victorian England.⁴⁰ Admitting an agreement to most of what the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review had to say concerning transformation and rebalancing the force, a more capable and flexible force will always be better able to respond to the future missions assigned. One with quick strike abilities on a small unit scale will assist in the war on terror and in the protection of vital American assets and citizens abroad. A general restructuring of the Guard and Reserve forces both in the Homeland Defense arena as well as specific mission training could indeed benefit the “Total Force.” Due to our recent experiences restructuring the force in order to “Nation Build” is a bit of a stretch, and that without the political will for such a mission both at home and in the affected nation it is unsustainable over time.

Given the constraints of time and the current need posture of our forces what is needed is a radical new concept of force employment in concert with a return to a more Powell like doctrine. We have our own asymmetrical advantages in this global battle and sustainment of this global fight should seek to utilize them as our main effort. Nobody controls the domains of Air

and Sea, Cyberspace and Space, and Information Technology (should we choose to use it) like the United States. Why the U.S. is not utilizing its own asymmetrical advantages in a comprehensive global strategy in creative and shocking ways is perplexing. The way ahead should utilize the lessons of what is now being called “The Afghan Model” by many officers and analysts alike.⁴¹ This model provides a radical departure from conventional wisdom, but it is here that we find an effective method that should assist in managing an unconventional foe in a more sustainable and economical way.

It will be near impossible to defeat an enemy waging their version of total war. Success instead lies in our ability to shape and manage an irregular foe and the battlespace, before, during and after direct combat operations. Utilizing the powerful and robust combination of Airpower, Special Forces, and Indigenous forces is the answer. Understanding that indigenous force objectives and tactics may not match our own, and thus the United States may have to be tailor or limit its own objectives is crucial to success. Through this combination we achieve true economy of force and the ability to bring down regimes and terror networks without the complications of a massive boots on the ground effort. In all aspects, utilization of local forces is cheaper, and though not necessarily always in our immediate interests the best way to disengage and or contain if need be in the future. Acceptance of a local or regional solution that follows may be all that can be hoped for. The War on Terror will always likely be with us; history has proven it will be a tactic chosen time and again. We should meet its threat with a strategy that constantly is thwarting its effectiveness, utilizes our own strengths, is much more cost effective, is sustainable with current force structures, and turns the critical factor of time in our favor vice the enemy’s.

Analysis or Conclusions

Unable to remain or to become a superpower in denial, the United States will therefore continue to be the principal force ensuring stability and protecting freedom around the world. Yet the United States cannot and should not respond to every crisis that arises. A realistic assessment of its resources dictates that America will have to maintain somewhat of a detachment and “selectively intervene.” Historically, selection has always been based on the overwhelming power of America’s populace both supporting and sacrificing for the chosen cause. The same history has not been as kind when deviation from this course is chosen. The American public’s continued support of an “all-volunteer force” will continue as it provides both a blanket of security and an enormous sense of pride. But, as evidenced from the above there are limitations to its employment. These limitations manifest themselves in the concept of time and effort needed to accomplish assigned objectives. As discussed previously none of the “doctrines” visited mention any concept of time but are instead focused on both the intensity of effort and the vitality of the objective. All have carefully worded and thought through maxims concerning force employment, and all provide exceptional baselines even in today’s world. But it is the concept of time, particularly when deciding on a “limited objective” course of action that has to rise to the forefront of any strategy or ends, ways, or means discussions.

Lacking the ability to unite the “passions” of a populace behind a comprehensive strategy for the current “Long War” and the inability to paint such a war in terms of a moral crusade have hampered support both from abroad as well as domestically. Unknowingly or not, it has also set in motion a stopwatch until a major policy change must occur. The sustained use of the “Total Force” has created tremendous strain as well as massive funding requirements with payment yet due. Current supplemental spending, the ability to leverage borrowing power, and a fairly robust

economy have continued to keep the war effort afloat. It is imperative to keep in mind what will be required for growth and “rebuilding” the force, is not a reduction in defense spending but an increase. Support for the effort must go far beyond the current conflicts of Afghanistan and Iraq and into future decades if we are to maintain our current global military hegemony. Future use of military force, particularly when used in a limited objective role must emphasize a realistic assessment of the time requirements or be based off a radically differing strategic approach.

The future will see a return to a more “Powell Doctrine” approach focusing on the “when” and the “where.” Adding to his famous questions should be the needed maxim, “And for how long?” A conceptual but more importantly, a realistic, understanding of an achievable end-state must drive all strategic discussions involving future commitment of United States forces. When deemed necessary, military action must be swift, powerful and decisive. To accomplish these ends, military operations must be meticulously planned through to the end-game, fully supported with the proper mix of equipment and an adequate number of troops and ‘sold’ to the American public. Lacking any of the above will drastically affect ones time constraints both positively and negatively. Hence when given the choice of an idealistic rather than a realistic driven policy in which an end-state can be left up to interpretation the United States must selectively choose whether to intervene or not only after a careful assessment of the time constraints required. America’s military will continue to perform like no other, sacrificing greatly for the cause of freedom and the security of these United States. It has never been more imperative to review and understand the decision process and how it affects these very forces than presently. This understanding must without a shadow of a doubt must contain a realistic appreciation for the concepts of time. Military intervention, no matter how powerful and decisive, will never win “the great ideological struggle of the 21st century,”⁴² alone.

NOTES

- ¹ Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," *CRS Report for Congress*, 9 November, 2007
- ⁴ Victor Davis Hanson, *Carnage and Culture*,
- ⁵ George W. Bush, "President's Address to the Nation," 11 September 2006, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060911-3.html>
- ⁶ Donald E. Nuechterlein, "The Concept of 'National Interest': A Time for New Approaches," *Orbis*, 23 (Spring 1979), 76.
- ⁷ Donald H. Rumsfeld, "The Long War," DoD New Briefing with Secretary Rumsfeld and Adm. Giambastiani, 01 February 2006, <http://www.defenselink.mil>.
- ⁸ Casper W. Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power," Speech to the National Press Club, Washington, D.C. 28 November 1984.
- ⁹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Peter Paret and Michael Howard (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984), p. 87.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² George H.W. Bush, "Remarks by President George Bush at The United States Military Academy," 05 January 1993.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Les Aspin, "With the Soviets and Cold War Gone, What is the Future for US Forces?" *ROA National Security Report*, November 1992, p. 23.
- ¹⁵ Ibid. p. 24.
- ¹⁶ Ibid. p. 25.
- ¹⁷ Colin L. Powell, "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1992.
- ¹⁸ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, D.C., White House), September 2002.
- ¹⁹ Jeffrey Record, "The Bush Doctrine and War with Iraq," *Parameters*, Spring 2003, pp. 4-18.
- ²⁰ George W. Bush, "Speech at West Point," 01 June 2002. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html>
- ²¹ Thomas Donnelly, "The Underpinnings of the Bush Doctrine," AEI Online, 01 February 2003. http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.15845/pub_detail.asp
- ²² Powell, *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1992.
- ²³ George H.W. Bush, "Remarks by President George Bush at The United States Military Academy," 05 January 1993.
- ²⁴ Edwin J. Arnold, Jr., "The Use of Military Power in Pursuit of National Interests," *Parameters*, Spring 1994, pp. 4-12.
- ²⁵ *The National Security Strategy* (NSS), 16 March 2006.
- ²⁶ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The Great Arsenal of Democracy," 29 December 1940.
- ²⁷ Harvey Sicherman, Ph.D., "Iraq Endgame," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, January 2007, <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200701.sicerman/iraqendgame.html>.
- ²⁸ Gen. George Casey, Testimony to House Armed Services Committee, 26 September 2007.
- ²⁹ Gen. Peter Schoomaker, Testimony to House Armed Services Committee, 23 January 2007.
- ³⁰ William H McMichael, "Iraq war has ground forces stretched thin," *Marine Corps Times*, 13 January 2008. http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2008/01/marine_stretched_080114w/

³¹ Frank G. Hoffman, *A Strategic Rationale for Land Force Expansion*, March 2007.

<http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200703.hoffman.landforceexpansion.html>

³² Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 364.

³³ Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command*, (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2003), p. 185.

³⁴ Arnold L. Punaro, *Strengthening America's Defenses in the New Security Environment*, Report to Congress-Testimony to House Armed Services Committee, 23 March 2007.

³⁵ Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report – 06 February 2006*, pp. 75-77.

³⁶ Gen. Peter Schoomaker, Testimony to House Armed Services Committee, 23 January 2007.

³⁷ Frank G. Hoffman, *A Strategic Rationale for Land Force Expansion*, March 2007.

³⁸ Bryan Bender, "Army is worn too thin, says general," *The Boston Globe*, 27 September 2007.

³⁹ Tammy Schultz, quoted in, "Iraq war has ground forces stretched thin," *Marine Corps Times*, 13 January 2008.

⁴⁰ Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace*, (New York, Basic Books, 2002), pp. 336-352.

⁴¹ Richard B. Andres, Craig Wills, and Thomas E. Griffith Jr., "Winning with Allies," *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Winter 2005/06), pp. 124-160.

⁴² George W. Bush, "President's Address to the Nation," 11 September 2006.

Bibliography

- Arnold Jr., Edwin J.. "The Use of Military Power in Pursuit of National Interests." Parameters, Spring 1994.
- Aspin, Les. "With the Soviets and Cold War Gone, What is the Future for US Forces?" ROA National Security Report, November 1992.
- Belasco, Amy. "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11." CRS Report for Congress, 9 November 2007.
- Bender, Bryan. "Army is worn too thin, says general." The Boston Globe. 27 September 2007.
- Boot, Max. The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power. New York: Basic Books, 2002.
- Bush, George H.W. "Remarks by the President George Bush at The United States Military Academy." 05 January 1993.
- Bush, George W. "President's Address to the Nation." 11 September 2006.
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060911-3.html>
- Bush, George W. "Speech at West Point." 01 June 2002.
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html>
- Casey, Gen. George. "Testimony to House Armed Services Committee." 26 September 2007.
- Clausewitz, Carl Von. On War. Ed. and trans. Peter Paret and Michael Howard. Princeton, Princeton Univ Press, 1984.
- Cohen, Eliot A.. Supreme Command. New York City: Free Press, 2003.
- Department of Defense. Quadrennial Defense Review Report – 06 February 2006.
- Donnelly, Thomas. "The Underpinnings of the Bush Doctrine." AEI Online. 01 February 2003.
http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.15845/pub_detail.asp
- Gordon, Michael R.. Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq. New York: Vintage, 2007.
- Hanson, Victor Davis. Carnage and Culture.
- Hoffman, Frank G. "A Strategic Rationale for Land Force Expansion." FPRI. March 2007.
<http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200703.hoffman.landforceexpansion.html>
- McMichael, William H.. "Iraq war has ground forces stretched thin." Marine Corps Times.

13 January 2008..

http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/new/2008/01/marine_stretched_080114w/

National Security Strategy of the United States of America. Washington, D.C. White House.

September 2002.

National Security Strategy of the United States of America. Washington, D.C. White House.

March 2006.

Nuechterlein, Donald E.. "The Concept of 'National Interest': A Time for New Approaches."

Orbis, 23. Spring 1976.

Powell, Colin L.. "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead." Foreign Affairs. Winter 1992.

Punaro, Arnold L.. "Strengthening America's Defenses in the New Security Environment."

Report to Congress, 23 March 2007.

Record, Jeffrey. "The Bush Doctrine and War with Iraq." Parameters. Spring 2003.

Ricks, Thomas E.. Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq. CT: Penguin Audio, 2006.

Roosevelt, Franklin D.. "The Great Arsenal of Democracy." Speech of 29 December 1940.

Rumsfeld, Donald H.. "The Long War." DoD News Briefing with Secretary Rumsfeld and Adm.

Giambastiani. 01 February 2006. <http://www.defenselink.mil>.

Schoomaker, Gen. Peter. "Testimony to House Armed Services Committee." 23 January 2007.

Sicherman, Harvey. "Iraq Endgame." Foreign Policy Research Institute. January 2007.

<http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200701.sicerman/iraqendgame.html>.

Sorley, Lewis. Thunderbolt : General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times

(Association of the U. S. Army Book Ser.). Washington: Brassey's, Incorporated, 1998.

Weinberger, Casper W.. "The Uses of Military Power."

Speech to National Press Club. Washington, D.C., 28 November 1984.